



Bridges to Housing Alleviating Family Homelessness in the Portland–Vancouver Metropolitan Area

Overview
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Introduction:

Bridges to Housing (B2H) represents an innovative and holistic approach to the growing and alarming problem of family homelessness in the Portland –Vancouver metropolitan area. B2H will offer hope for a better future to the families and children involved in the program at the same time that it builds the local and national base of knowledge about how to effectively act to address family homelessness and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. The project meets a critical community need with an innovative program that builds upon regional and national experience and understanding of best practices.

B2H is a targeted initiative aimed at moving high need homeless families out of the cycle of homelessness. B2H calls for a realignment of housing and service provision in the four-county metropolitan area. Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties in Oregon have joined together with Clark County in Washington state, along with cities and housing authorities in the four counties, to jointly develop B2H to support families in their efforts to overcome poverty and progress towards self-sufficiency. B2H is a recognition that family homelessness is a mobile and regional issue, and that the best solution will be regional as a result. B2H represents a step forward nationally in its grounding in a regional framework, in its commitment to best practices, and in its commitment to achieve and measure significant individual, family and system outcomes.

The Need for Action on Family Homelessness in the Portland-Vancouver Area:

Approximately 1,800 high-need homeless families live in the four-county region at any given point in time, with more than 3,900 children – an average of 2.2 children per family. We define high-need homeless families as those experiencing multiple barriers to housing, such as mental illness, domestic violence, physical and cognitive disabilities, and alcohol/substance abuse.

The supply of permanent housing for high-need homeless families falls far short of the need. In Multnomah County, for instance, there are 203 emergency shelter beds and 1,146 transitional housing beds for families, but only 117 family units (358 beds) of permanent supportive housing for families with significant needs. Permanent supportive housing is a critical resource, as research is showing that shelter and transitional housing simply do not provide the time that families need to stabilize, make good use of supportive services, and begin to build their functional capacity.

Family homelessness is especially hard on children, and continues or begins a cycle of intergenerational homelessness and poverty. Homeless children are 60% more likely to be removed from the care of their parents. School is difficult to manage -- nationally, 20% of homeless school-aged children are not enrolled. And interruptions in education are quite damaging. Students who change schools four or more times by 6th grade are on average a year

behind their peers in learning. And, each time a child changes school, the odds of dropping out increase by 30%.

High need homeless families are often high resource users, interacting with the health care, school, mental health, and corrections systems at great cost. Addressing the needs of these families and developing strategies to overcome family barriers to success with short-term, intensive interventions also promises costs savings to the system as a whole.

Bridges to Housing Program Design

Funds will be distributed through a competitive application process to applicants who propose to holistically address the needs of homeless families using a model of permanent housing subsidized to a level of affordability for that family plus a package of services which will support all family members achieving identified goals. Subsidized child care will be provided, plus services which might include, for example, mental health care, employment training, after school tutoring, etc. Applicants may be single providers of housing and services, or may be partnerships between agencies, but families served under B2H will always have access to a comprehensive package of housing plus services. And, applicants might apply for only housing subsidy, or only services, or only child care, but families will always have access to the same support. Applicants will agree to a standard set of outcome measures, and will work to support a complete longitudinal evaluation of the program's impact on families and systems. In this way, B2H serves not only the families involved, but contributes to our understanding of effective use of funds within the housing and service system to support family success.

The chart below illustrates the B2H program design, and possible uses of \$2 million. For illustration purposes, costs of providing program elements to 15 families are listed, and possible combinations of expenditures are charted.

Bridges to Housing: Sample Project Types and Costs								
	One Time Cost	Annual Cost						
Sample Project Types	Capital for Debt-Free Project	Operating Subsidy for Debt-Free Project	Rent subsidy Debt Financed Project	Intensive Support Service	Child Care Subsidy	Total Cost Year One	Sample One Year Project Mix with \$2 million Investment	
COST for 15 units (one case manager)	\$600,000	\$42,000	\$90,000	\$68,000	\$73,000		Option 1 (Many other subsidy sources available)	Option 2 (Most subsidy from B2H)
Debt Free Development: Capital, Operating, Childcare and Services Subsidy Needed	X	X		X	X	\$783,000	1 of these projects - 15 units	1 of these projects - 15 units
Debt Financed Development: Rent Subsidy, Services, and Childcare Subsidy Needed			X	X	X	\$231,000	1 of these projects - 15 units	2 of these projects - 15 units
Debt Financed Development with Section 8/Public Housing: Services and Childcare Subsidy Needed				X	X	\$141,000	3 of these project - 45 units	
Housing Authority Debt Financed Building: Partial Rent/Operating Subsidy, Need Services + Childcare Subsidy			1/2	X	X	\$186,000	2 of these projects - 30 units	
Debt Financed Building: Rent Subsidy, Need Services and Partial Childcare Subsidy			X	X	1/2	\$194,500	1 of these projects - 15 units	
						Total Cost	\$2,003,500	\$2,028,000
						Total Units Provided	120	60

Bridges to Housing Responds to Homeless Family Needs Using Best Practices:

Over the past decade a number of communities across the country have implemented programs which are designed to serve high needs homeless families in new ways. Successful programs share some or all of the following best practices, which will be incorporated into B2H:

- Adherence to the “Housing First” model -- swift movement into permanent housing, coupled with comprehensive services to support stability in housing. (Placement into permanent housing with services has been shown in multiple studies to improve outcomes for a lower total cost per family.)
- Advance team training of all housing and service providers in use of the “Housing First” model.
- Systematic use of comprehensive screening assessment protocols, addressing family strengths and motivation to succeed, as well as identified needs.
- Clear identification of an accountable agency and case management staff, responsible for providing home-based, individualized, transitional case management.
- Case planning built on a “goals and outcomes” strategy, rather than traditional needs assessment, with multiple target outcomes including employment progress, health stabilization, children’s school performance etc.
- Strong emphasis on the availability of child care, after-school care, mental health and other children’s services. (Strong provision for children’s needs has been found to correlate with parents’ motivation, confidence and determination to succeed.)
- Voluntary access to activities and events aimed at building community cohesion among resident families.

Benefits of Bridges to Housing:

Benefits from the Bridges to Housing effort will be evident from three perspectives. Individual and family outcomes are expected to be significant as families are placed into permanent housing and receive housing subsidy plus a comprehensive and intensive set of services to enable them to achieve goals. Regional system outcomes will be achieved as implementation and evaluation occurs. B2H not only stabilizes families; it stabilizes the supply of housing and services to homeless families, by inculcating standards of practice, and by integrating delivery systems across geographical/ jurisdictional and service sector boundaries. National models will be strengthened as we test application of best practices in a sound research model and share results.

1. Individual and Family Outcomes: Our evaluation will measure our success across program sites (applicants) in six domains.

- *Housing*: Placement into permanent housing, Maintenance/stability in permanent housing, Repair of eviction history
- *Economic*: Increased income (Employment at higher wage, or establish disability entitlement); Improve credit scores/ repair credit history; Establish banking; Establish savings – open IDA
- *Services*: Access appropriate mainstream services
- *Family*: Maintain family unity/ progress towards reunification, Maintain family safety (if history of domestic violence)
- *Children*: Increase school readiness, Improve school attendance, Improve school performance, High school enrollment, Complete high school, College enrollment, IDA participation
- *Community*: Develop community support network

2. Regional System Outcomes. We will document systems change, with the following outcomes anticipated.

- B2H will provide inter-jurisdictional leadership to build a region-wide permanent housing supply with supportive services, specifically targeted at high-risk homeless families. Access to housing and services across the region will reduce “churning” of families from one jurisdiction to another, with all the attendant negative impacts on families, provider agencies and funders.
- Within each county, B2H will stimulate more efficient expenditure of public funds, by reducing “revolving door” services into and out of temporary/transitional housing and other systems (corrections, foster care, mental health).
- Between housing and supportive service providers, B2H will promote alignment of housing and service resources to maximize family success. B2H offers a comprehensive approach based on disciplined coordination between provider agencies, beginning before family placement. Selection is based on careful assessment of the family’s strengths and motivation to succeed, as well as its needs. Case planning is driven by a “goals and outcomes” strategy, rather than traditional needs assessment.
- B2H encourages accountability and best practices through reporting on a set of uniform outcome measures, and through policy oversight by the Regional Steering Committee.
- B2H success with families will be used to advocate for realignment of public funds at the state and federal levels, decreasing reliance on private fundraising over the course of the program.

3. National Outcomes:

- B2H will serve as a national model of program design, evaluation, and inter-jurisdictional systems change. Unique aspects of B2H include its holistic approach to family success, incorporation of current best practices, and an inter-jurisdictional, bi-state approach.

Evaluation Plan:

There are three clear foci of the evaluation, which roughly correspond to the benefits and outcomes listed above. The first will be documenting the attainment of the expected results at the individual and family level across the six domains which are common to all B2H efforts. A longitudinal study will be designed to be part of the B2H effort and implemented if adequate funds are raised.

The second purpose of the evaluation will be to provide an ongoing formal process evaluation. This will provide a mechanism to routinely and regularly monitor both the emerging results of the efforts to improve the conditions of the participating families, but as importantly, to monitor the efficiency and efficacy of project implementation. Following procedures and techniques common to empowerment evaluation from the human services field and continuous quality management from business and industry, this effort will serve as the backbone of drawing together and keeping focused the myriad of jurisdictional institutions, service providers, and project managers through continuous feedback on all aspects of the project. This will support accomplishment of one of the most critical overall outcomes of this project -- to improve regional efficiency by reducing or eliminating duplication of effort while leveraging other assets (funds and services) to end homelessness.

This project is expected to facilitate and model regional systems change for our partners across the nation. With this expectation comes the final and critical element of the evaluation. This will be to document what happened, by and for whom, and the ensuing results. Understanding what challenges emerged as the project was implemented, how the challenges were identified,

and what was attempted to overcome the challenges is as important to those who might replicate the effort as are the straightforward successes realized.

Preliminary Fundraising Plan:

Goal for Years 1 –10 of Bridges to Housing

The 10 year fundraising goal for B2H is \$20 million in new funds brought in and leveraged by over \$50 million in “mainstream” or existing public funds (public housing or Section 8 rent subsidy, TANF, SSDI, Oregon Health Plan, etc.).

- This includes \$10 million raised locally from new private and public funds and a requested \$10 million match of both new private and new public funds from the Gates Foundation
- The locally raised \$10 million will be raised in 2 to 3 year commitments over the first 5 to 8 years of the effort
- We assume that at least half of this \$10 million will be private foundation or corporate, supplementing new general funds or special funds allocations by the jurisdictions
- Some of this \$10 million may also be national funds for purposes such as evaluation of a replicable model.

First Three Years - Potential Sources for \$6 million/3 year start-up

- Have been allocated \$1 million from Multnomah County general fund
- Possibility of City of Portland matching Multnomah County \$1 million with City general fund revenue in year One
- Plan to request \$500,000 from Children's Investment Fund (CHIF) to match private foundation grants in 2006
- Plan to make request of jurisdictions for capacity building funds for administrative entity startup and operations
- Plan to request \$1 million over 3 years from Meyer Memorial Trust
- Requests of other local and national foundations and corporations (potential contributors include: US Bank, Oregon Community Foundation, Enterprise Foundation's Supportive Housing Project; NW Areas Foundation; Community Foundation of SW Washington; M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust; Collins Foundation; Hanna Andersson Children's Foundation; Penney Family Fund)
- Request initial \$3 million from Gates Foundation in 2006

Bridges to Housing Administration:

B2H will be administered by a non-profit organization. Negotiations are under way with The Neighborhood Partnership Fund, an Oregon intermediary with fifteen years of experience providing support and infrastructure for community development. The non-profit will coordinate all aspects of program implementation, will manage privately raised funds, and will track and report on the expenditure of public funds. The non-profit will contract with an independent program evaluator, and manage internal and external communication about impacts of the B2H effort.

Oversight will be provided by a Regional Steering Committee, which will both provide guidance and policy direction to B2H and mobilize private, corporate, and political support for the effort.